

**SUBMISSION TO:****Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2016****SUBMISSION COVER SHEET****Closing date for submissions is 25 April 2016.**

Please complete and submit this form with your submission to:

**Email:**  
vminquiry@parliament.qld.gov.au**Post:** **Fax:** 07 3553 6699  
Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

<b>Organisation or individual:</b>	TJ & HL JONES AND DALE JONES		
<b>Principal contact:</b>	DALE JONES		
<b>Position:</b>	MANAGER AND BEEF PRODUCER		
<b>Telephone:</b>		<b>Fax:</b>	
<b>Mobile:</b>			
<b>Email address:</b>			
<b>Street address:</b>			
<b>Suburb/City:</b>	CLERMONT	<b>State:</b>	QUEENSLAND
		<b>Postcode:</b>	4721
<b>Postal address:</b>			
<b>Suburb/City:</b>	CLERMONT	<b>State:</b>	QUEENSLAND
		<b>Postcode:</b>	4721

Is all or part of your submission confidential? Yes, all ☐ Yes, part ☐ No ☒ ☒ (copy box to indicate answer)

If part, please identify which sections are confidential:

Reason for confidentiality:

# **SUBMISSION**

I provide my submission to reject the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 in all its entirety.

## **POLITICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT:**

The move by the current QLD Labor government to introduce this bill is political payoff for the current and continued support from the extreme Greens Party and environmentalists. Both the Greens and Labor parties believe wholeheartedly in large government and bureaucracy controlling all aspects of social, economic and environmental management in a manner they see fit. The Labor Party focuses on the social and the Greens Party the environmental, and this combined bias has a massive economic negative impact on the community and the state. They are simply robbing Peter to pay Paul. In this case Peter is the agricultural sector that must pay the cost and be used as a political bargaining chip in the Labor/Greens alliance while Paul is the concept of *"man-made climate change destroying the world as we know it"* that Labor/Green (socialist) governments have hung their hat on as a political scare campaign to further and justify their itinerary of more government control.

Contrary to what factual evidence may state, if it appeases their political and social views, they will manipulate, take out of context or simply ignore these facts to help support their argument for more legislation, more regulation and more government control. A fine example of this is by the Labor government referring to findings in the 2012-2014 SLATS report that land clearing has increased considerably within the last few years to unacceptable levels (300,000ha/year 2014) as justification to the public to further restrict vegetation management by landholders. What the Labor government fails to inform the public is that this report also shows;

- This increase in clearing is from the lowest recorded clearing rates of 2009/2010 period
- High rainfall period 2009-2012 promoted vegetation growth, particularly in previously cleared areas (regrowth growing back)
- Majority of clearing occurred in the Brigalow Belt (regrowth control) and Mulga Lands (clearing of remnant Mulga for drought stock feed)
- The Brigalow Belt falls over a very large area of the reef catchment (again, regrowth control following wet years)
- Even with this large % of increased clearing rates, the overall tree coverage had a net increase of 500,000ha 2011-2014

Labor/Greens are simply using whatever means necessary to mislead and shock the public into demonising the agricultural sector and landholders as environmental vandals that are destroying everything around them and must be controlled by more government regulation.

The extreme greens movement ideology believes that we must take a snap shot at this very point in time of the planet and any change that occurs be it man-made or natural, must be bad and must be stopped. The planet always has and always will change its climate

and its environment on its own accord just as all species throughout the planet's history have had and always will have an impact on the environment around them, but always adapting to these changes as they occur. The Great Barrier Reef itself is relatively young and has already survived previous extreme climate shifts from warm periods to ice ages as short as 10,000 years ago. CO2 levels, temperatures, rainfall and other climatic events have all varied throughout history but now according to environmentalists; any change must be bad and needs to be stopped through more government control and regulation as they see fit.

Australia is well known as having a varying climate and as such the Australian agriculture industry is continually improving, adjusting and innovating world leading practices to achieve both positive environmental and economic outcomes. There is absolutely no reason for more government control and regulation forced upon agriculture. As more knowledge and understanding becomes available, landholders are already voluntarily changing their practices to improve soil condition, improve ground cover, improve grass and vegetation management, decrease soil runoff, improve water quality, repair/restore and prevent erosion all at considerable expense. Why? Because instead of being environmental vandals; landholders do care greatly about the environment. It is the lifeblood of agriculture's very existence and one is always looking to improve not just for themselves, but for the next and successive generations to continue producing world class agricultural products. All while trying to compete on the world economic stage in an environment where production costs in Australia are extortion compared to other countries and products compete on an uneven playing field where other countries subsidise their farmer's products as well as having lower production costs. Instead of receiving a pat on the back for a *"job well done"* for putting food on people's plates three times a day, clothes on their backs, improving the environmental landscape and contributing to the economic prosperity of the state and country, landholders are constantly vilified as scum and criminals by the unfair, deceitful slandering from extreme environmentalist Greens and Labor Party supporters and members.

The hypocrisy of the Labor/Greens Government knows no bounds. In one hand they wish to implement a bill that will impose more legislation, regulation, red tape and bureaucracy costing jobs and money to the agricultural sector in the name of environmental gain whilst with the other, approve massive mining, rail and port infrastructure to dig, move and ship hundreds of millions of tonnes of coal through the Great Barrier Reef to burn in other countries power stations and then boast about how many jobs and how much money it will generate for the Queensland economy. These double standards were again shown when the Premier of Queensland flew to Townsville during the failure and subsequent closing of the nickel refinery plant located there to support the affected workers who were losing their jobs. Meanwhile, agriculture in Queensland has been suffering intensely through severe drought, poor prices and poor government policy (live export ban and vegetation management regulations) for several years and there has been little to no support shown to help rural Queensland. It is blatantly obvious that the jobs, livelihoods and health and wellbeing of the people of rural and agricultural Queensland do not matter to the Labor/Greens politicians and their supporters and they will continue to use landholders and agriculture as political pawns to appease political alliances and provide environmental subsidies to other industries favourable to the continuation of their political existence.

## **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT (REINSTATEMENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016:**

This bill represents yet another change to the already overregulated and constrictive legislation of Vegetation Management Act 1999. Repeated changes and amendments severely inhibits long term environmental and economic management practices being implemented by landholders as well as negatively impacting confidence within agriculture by all stakeholders involved.

### **-REINSTATING THE PROTECTION OF HIGH-VALUE REGROWTH ON FREEHOLD AND INDIGENOUS LAND (CATEGORY C)**

This is simply another tree grab designed to increase the spreadsheet numbers of controlled vegetation by the Government so they can boast about “*nation leading vegetation management laws*” to themselves, their followers and the international community to help meet international climate treaties.

What it means to the landholder is yet another layer of regulation and red tape that stifles and restricts positive environmental and economic vegetation self-management that the current regulations and self-assessable code provides. It also erodes basic landholder rights of freehold land who have paid for the economic value of the vegetation only to have the rights to that vegetation removed whilst not being financially compensated by the state who in turn can then sell the carbon value of this vegetation while again not paying any compensation to the landholders and/or indigenous owners. To put it into context, it's as if a person buys a four bedroom house, then the government forces the householder to no longer use the 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom, then the government rents out that 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom for their own political and economic gain.

It also means which is of great concern, is that category C high value regrowth will be made applicable to freehold and Indigenous land. Currently, self-assessable codes regulate Cat C regrowth on leasehold land. The self-assessable codes are currently under review by the current Labor state government and look to be changing. If legislation is passed applying Cat C to freehold and indigenous land, then the Government can simply change these self-assessable codes (regulation set in place to meet legislation requirements) as they see fit to further restrict the landholder self-management of both Cat C high value regrowth and vegetation in general. For instance, Cat C is currently only applicable to leasehold land and marked regrowth vegetation that has not been cleared since end of 1989. If passed, government could, at the stroke of a pen remove that 1989 regulation and other parts of the self-assessable code as they see fit to once again, further restrict basic landholder rights to self-manage their land and to appease Labor's own political agenda. All, entirely at the landholder's expense.

## **-BROADENING PROTECTION OF REGROWTH VEGETATION IN WATERCOURSE AREAS (CATEGORY R) TO COVER ALL GREAT BARRIER REEF CATCHMENTS**

Contrary to what environmentalists may want to believe, implementing a 50m buffer zone on water courses for vegetation protection does not automatically mean positive environmental outcomes but does mean negative outcomes for landholders.

- Grass cover can and does provide; better protection to bank stability, filtering of sediments and other elements carried by water movement, soil exposed direct to rain, infiltration of moisture and nutrients into soil, reducing water velocity across land and into water courses, erosion control.
- Grass cover can be severely reduced and impeded by the leaving of, thickening and natural encroachment of vegetation.
- Self-management by landholders to repair/avoid environmental degradation, build and maintain property infrastructure restricted.
- Further erodes landholder's rights on their land.
- Self-assessable codes for Cat R can be changed to further regulate/restrict landholder's actions.
- Soil movement and erosion is a naturally occurring event and always will be. It is why the planet has fertile soil flood plains, defined rivers and creeks, and why these rivers and creeks continually change position. Whilst landholders try to reduce it, it is still part of nature.

## **-REMOVING PROVISIONS PERMITTING CLEARING FOR HIGH-VALUE AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATED HIGH-VALUE AGRICULTURE**

This part of the bill will have an astronomically negative impact across all areas of Queensland now and into the future as it effectively shuts down any new farming growth potential for any purpose. It will cost jobs and money and restrict economic development.

- Landholders cannot develop farming areas to supply supplement feed to livestock during drought as well as during regular seasons to help forward livestock to meet regular and premium market specifications. This could lead to animal welfare being put at risk as well as potential unnecessary land degradation.
- Landholders cannot expand their current farming operation within existing land to meet market growth and demand from customers.
- Food security for Australia and abroad is restricted.
- New suitable farming areas identified mainly in the northern part of Queensland cannot be developed severely constraining economic growth and job prosperity to already struggling communities.

## **- RE-INTRODUCING REVERSE ONUS OF PROOF AND DENYING MISTAKE OF FACT**

This is a completely outrageous attack on the fundamental principles of basic human rights in Australia. It furthers the Labor/Greens mentality of complete government control and dictatorship over the population and now into the courts. The Australian judicial system operates under the principle of innocent until proven guilty in a court of law and also to confirm the notion *“that it is better to set a guilty person free than to imprison an innocent person”*. This bill flies in the face of these principles and all that is known to be decent in this great country. It is absolutely incomprehensible that an accused serial rapist, mass murderer or paedophile has more legal and basic human rights to a fair and just trial than an accused landholder who may or may not have cleared any area of protected vegetation. Combine that with no mistake of fact defence and any chance at a fair and just trial of an accused landholder is completely removed. It is well known that the government produced vegetation maps that landholders rely on to make sure they are acting lawfully when clearing vegetation are notoriously inaccurate and filled with errors and yet the landholder doesn't know which parts of the maps are or could be inaccurate. And once the Government decides as they see fit that the landholder has committed a breach, there is no excusable defence besides trying to prove that no breach has actually occurred and this is only possible when no clearing at all has actually taken place. It makes clearing any vegetation for any reason in controlled areas like working in an environmental minefield of litigation and prosecution and removes landholder's ability to effectively manage their land and infrastructure.

## **-REINSTATING PROVISIONS IN THE WATER ACT 2000 TO REGULATE AGAINST THE DESTRUCTION OF VEGETATION IN A WATERCOURSE UNDER A RIVERINE PROTECTION PERMIT**

This is again political fuel to help feed the fire to demonise and label landholders as environmental vandals. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word destroy – *“End of existence of (something) by damaging or attacking it”*. This bill falsely implies that when vegetation is cleared as part of a riverine protection permit it is wholeheartedly destroyed for ever and never to return. This is absolutely deceitful and incorrect. When a water holding structure is built within a water course it promotes all vegetation growth and regrowth in the surrounds through increased moisture availability soaking through the soil as well as providing a new water source and habitat for native animals.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, I totally object to the whole of the Vegetation Management (Reinstatement) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. It;

- Removes landholders rights over their land without compensation
- Removes landholders rights to a fair and just judicial process afforded to other citizens
- Further restricts landholders ability to manage their land and infrastructure
- Further restricts landholders, Queensland's and Australia's economic growth and opportunity
- Demonises landholders as environmental vandals
- Falsely implies positive environmental outcomes
- Ensures bigger government, more red tape and more government control over landholders
- Provides the framework for further regulation and restriction on vegetation management to be implemented by government as they see fit

Date:

22/4/2016

Signed:

Dale Jones